

Ruben succeeds Amoss on Senate budget panel

With great ceremony, Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller announced changes last week in his starting lineup for the 1998 session of the General Assembly.

Miller went to the trouble of calling a news conference — an unusual occurrence for the Prince George's Democrat — to make public a variety of changes, many of them brought about by the death last month of Sen. William H. Amoss, a Democrat who represented Harford and Cecil counties.

Amoss, who was vice chairman of the important Budget and Taxation Committee, wore a number of hats in the Senate, and his death left a huge void in Miller's leadership team.

Out of a concern for geographic balance — and to keep certain

temper cool — Miller named Sen. Ida G. Ruben, a Montgomery County Democrat, vice chairwoman of the committee. Sen. Barbara A. Hoffman, the Baltimore Democrat, will continue to chair the panel.

While both women proclaimed they were friends — albeit from rival jurisdictions — an exchange after Miller's announcement told the tale a little more accurately.

With Ruben as her vice chairwoman, Hoffman said with a wry smile, "I'll be able to keep an eye on her."

Ruben added quickly, "And I'll be able to keep an eye on *her*."

Miller elevated Sen. Thomas M. "Mac" Middleton, a first-term Charles County Democrat, to Amoss' spot as chairman of the capital budget subcommittee, the panel that decides whose hog gets gored during the legislature's pork fest each spring in the waning days of the session.

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